

On His Centenary: To Robert Graves

Lois Severini

O poet of poets, worker, walker, swimmer, laurel-browed, black-cloaked, pockets full of buttons and bibelots, where are you now, heaven or hell?

Or did you do your time in purgatory, a decade of living oblivion before that strong body gave up the ghost.

No. Not for you Heaven and Hell and the Circles between. No crucifix on your coffin. And no reunion with Virgil.

Does the White Goddess fill your cup? Bring you bright oranges, white lemon blossom, the first figs?

Is Laura there? No, not Petrarch's. You know, the other one. And is it arcadian?

Or just ... dust.

The church bell still clangs. Village women still judge, stone faced, from the doorways.

But now they are permed, their granddaughters, bikinied. Franco is dead. Long live our beloved Poet.

Your Muses have dispersed, but worshippers blanket the Cala, swim in your bath, a school of minnows feeding on fame.

Tour buses ply the mountain roads. 'And there is the Poet's house.' 'And there. There on the top of the hill is the Poet's grave.'